

Self- Publishing Guide

Madelyn Rose Craig

Self-Publishing Guide

Madelyn Rose Craig
Rosewood Publishing

Copyright © 2024 by Madelyn Rose Craig.

Contents

Introduction.....	6
Writing Goals and Author Brand.....	7
Publishing Imprint	11
Writing plan	13
Plan the Work, Work the Plan	13
Idea Stage.....	14
Organizing	14
Writing Stage.....	14
Editing.....	17
DIY Cover Design and Formatting.....	20
Interior Formatting.....	20
Size	20
Organizing	21
Fonts, Margins, and other Interior Tidbits	21
Cover Formatting.....	23
Front and Back.....	26
Images and Colors	27
Cover Sizes and Layout	27
Metadata	29
Pricing.....	30
Other Publishing Details.....	31
Publishing Platforms.....	33
Publishing Timeline.....	34
Advertising Ideas	37
Costs for Your Book.....	38
Cheat sheets	40
General Links.....	40
Keyboard Shortcuts	41
Copyright Page Example	42

Introduction

Hello, and thank you for checking out my self-publishing guide! I initially put this together so that I did not have to keep looking up this information every time I went to publish a book, but then I thought other people might want a guide like this as well. Many other authors have put together similar guides that I found helpful but did not have all of the information that I was looking for. If there is something that you have questions about that I didn't include in my guide, feel free to send them to me and I will try to include them in another version of this guide. I hope you find it helpful!

Blessing to you and yours,

~Madelyn Rose Craig

Writing Goals and Author Brand

I am assuming that you want to write, and soon you may want to publish. So, where do we begin? Honestly, there are a few places we could begin, and some of the things in this section could be done in a variety of orders, and you may have done some of them already. But in the event that you haven't, here are some things to consider.

Are you using a **pen name** or your name? You can use one or the other, or you can use both. Some authors have multiple pen names, a different pen name for each genre they write in. Some people choose pen names for anonymity, or to fit their genre better. Like a man chooses a feminine-sounding name to write romance, and a woman chooses a masculine-sounding name for true crime. I write under my own, full name because I like my name and I write what I love. Your name should in some way fit your author goals.

Along these lines, decide on some of your **author goals**. A great book that can help you formulate this is called [*Business Boutique*](#). This book is written "for" women, but the information is good for all. Are you here to sell a million copies, or do you only want to print some books for yourself and a few friends, or something in-between? Do you want to write a lot of books, or do you have one or two in mind? When do you want to finish these books? What funds do you have to start with? Will you be doing this on the side, or to replace your current gig? What genre(s) do you want to write in? What skills do you need to acquire in order to finish your book and what can you outsource? Do you want to do a regular blog, write about other topics of interest, or do a reader funnel? These goals can change, but you can only change the plan if you have a plan. Start with the end in mind. Otherwise, you're likely to run into a wall, or out of steam, before you reach your main goal: the book.

Your next step will be two-fold: You need to build your **author brand** and determine your **target audience**. Your author brand will also help you form your imprint, but I'll talk about that in the next section. What about your brand makes it yours? What does it say about you or your writing? Some people, under multiple imprints and author names, form multiple specific and unique author brands. But maybe you're like

me and think that's too complicated, or there is only one genre that you like to write under. Craft a brand that fits you and your writing.

Determining your author brand will help you find your **target audience** and help them find you. Determining your audience will also help you craft your author brand. Your audience, and with them your genre, can determine styles, colors, themes, and content for both your writing and your brand. What are you looking to write, who reads that type of writing, and where are they located? All of these things implied by your audience will help form your author brand, your imprint, your designs, your content, your formatting, and even the future of your writing career.

One of the best ways to formalize you and your work, and get it in front of the eyes of readers, is to create a **website**. We live in the age of technology. You need some internet presence. There are multiple ways to do this. You can find a place that will sell you a domain and do the hosting, or maybe you buy your domain name in one place and have your website hosted in another. Maybe someone creates a website for you. Whatever you do, I strongly suggest you buy your domain name. Like the ISBNs I'll discuss later, this gives you control over your home site.

Some people create a website for their author name, their book name, and their publishing imprint. This was too much for me. I simply have one with my name under which I share information [about all of my works](#). I chose [WordPress](#) for both my domain and hosting because 1) I was already familiar with it from my blog 2) I found it relatively easy to use and 3) it was relatively cheap. Know your strengths and weaknesses in deciding where you want your website and how you want it set up.

Then, set up your website! (Or have someone set it up for you.) Decided on colors, themes, and layout. Do you want a blog or a simple "this is what I write" website? Do you want to be able to sell from your website? This would mean you keep copies of your book in your home to ship yourself when you get orders. I do not do this because I think it defeats the purpose of Print On Demand (POD) and I don't have the time for shipping out orders or the space to carry copies. But you should do what is best for you and fits your author goals.

But back to the website. For starters, you will want a home page, a page about your book (once you have your descriptions, which I'll explain in a section below), a page about you, and a contact page (*If* you want to be contacted, which you might for interviews or author events).

Your website can also be a way for you to stay in contact with your readers through an email signup to a newsletter (this can be done through hosting such as Mailchimp, Mailerlite, or others, none of which I personally have liked, but many authors do). You can also run a blog ([like mine](#)), announce a contest or giveaways, and offer [freebies](#) for emails. Most of all, the website should be your landing page, or home base, for readers. They will get to know about you, your work, and your news. It should match your brand, grabbing the attention of the readers you want.

Along those lines, you will also need to **find your readers**. Yes, some might stumble across your book, but those will be few and far between. Thus, you will need to be on **social media**. You don't have to be on every social media site, and you probably shouldn't be. Decide which ones you like to use best and which ones your readers are already on and become familiar with those sites. Some basics are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and even Amazon and Goodreads. If you have a blog, you can even share your posts across multiple sites. Also, you should create a [Linktree](#) account and, once you publish your book, a [Universal Book Link](#). These convenient tools connect readers to your website, giveaways, books, and social media accounts so that they can follow you. For an example, check out the [Linktree](#) and [Universal Link](#) I created.

Now, when you create these social media profiles, you should include a little **description** of yourself and a picture of yourself (assuming you're not going anonymous). People like to know the person behind the story. I like to create three types of bios: the long one, the brief/profile one, and the short/elevator one. You will see me use this same guide for book descriptions as well. In places where you can keep a long profile, I tend to use [two](#): one of the shorter ones first for the skimmer and then the long one down below. The long one is good for your website, Universal Book Link profile, Amazon, and the About the Author page in your book (if you choose to include one). In places where you only have a limited

amount of space, I use one of the other two depending on the character limit. The brief/profile one I typically use on the back cover or author profile section of my books and on some of my social media accounts. But typically, I only have room for the one-line elevator bio on social media. Keep these in their own document for easy reference so you don't have to go searching for them or reinvent them.

With that settled, let's move on to forming a Publishing Imprint.

Publishing Imprint

Many of these details can be found elsewhere, but I think it is good for it to have a section all to itself. I explained some of these in the above, like branding. Where other people have written on these individual topics better than I can, I will link to them when I deem it appropriate. Each of the steps below really should be followed in order, especially after you have set up the foundation of your author brand. While you may start writing before you have a social media presence, you must know what your business is about before setting up an imprint.

You also might want to know *why* you should set up an imprint. For one, it looks professional. You actually don't have to, and you can just use a name you make up on the spot if you publish on Amazon. But your "imprint" might get lost with another "imprint" by the same, and you'll lose views of your work. Readers might also shy away if it doesn't have a "publisher." Amazon is the printer regardless; the imprint is the publishing name. But without the latter, your book will *appear* to be less than complete. Your imprint also reflects your author brand. Look at the imprint names on the books of your genre that you enjoy. Often, you'll notice that they in some way invoke the image of the genre you'll be reading. Or, they will reflect the author or company that wrote or published them. Keep this in mind when choosing a publishing imprint. In addition, making your author imprint into an official business will help with taxes and keep your personal identity safe. Instead of using my SSN, I use an EIN for taxes and setting up my profile on the POD platforms.

Below is a general guide to follow when setting up your imprint:

1. What type of business are you?
 - a. [Sole proprietorship](#) ([SBA](#))
2. Select and [research](#) your publishing (Imprint) name
 - a. This will be the name you file your DBA (Doing Business As name) under
 - b. Should imply something about your author brand, you, or your work

- c. Some people make multiple imprints for each genre they publish. I don't do this, so I chose something encompassing yet fluid: Rosewood Publishing
 - d. Research the name and come up with variations. What I chose wasn't what I originally had in mind, but it was available
 - e. Make a logo. I use Canva, but there are other options
- 3. Decide on an address (either your home address or a PO box)
- 4. Register your imprint name with your state (DBA, trade name, or fictitious name) (\$25~)
 - a. You can usually find this information on your state's SBA website
- 5. Register for an [EIN](#) (Employer Identification Number) for taxes
- 6. Get a business checking account and set up a PayPal
 - a. **Make sure your imprint name is correct**
 - b. Read a business book like [Business Boutique](#) or the like to help you with monetary and goal planning
- 7. If you move states, [here is a handy article](#) to help you "move" your imprint
 - a. I've had to do this once and it was mostly just a matter of figuring out the new state website and making sure my taxes (EIN) were filed under the new address

Writing plan

So now we need to discuss the writing portion of publishing. (Who knew, right?) Likely, you've already started writing, or you're halfway through, or maybe you are finished (I wouldn't know anyone who's done that...). If so, you can move to the next part. Or don't. After all, I did write all this down for you.

Plan the Work, Work the Plan

While the tips I have in the next two subsections are great for writing, you also need to have a game plan for publishing. I have pieces of this game plan throughout this guide. The best general one is in the section called Publishing Timeline. There are also general plans in the first two sections. But writing needs a plan of its own.

1. Come up with the idea
2. Research idea
3. Outline the idea
4. Draft the idea
 - a. Set it aside
5. Rough edit
 - a. Set aside
6. More edits
 - a. Set aside
7. Big Edit
8. Get a professional editor to edit
 - a. Work with the editor and do edits as they send you feedback. This could take weeks or months.
9. Format or get a formatter
10. Now you have a manuscript

The subsections below will help you formulate your idea and begin polishing your manuscript, along with helping you find your voice. But I cannot stress enough that you need a game plan and a timeline. Each of the above points takes time, and that time will vary depending on the speed you write at, how much time you have to write in each session, life, and how long each edit takes. Taking longer to get a good

manuscript is better than having a half-baked book. Know your time and take your time. You can change the plan, but not unless you have one to begin with.

Idea Stage

I am assuming you already have an idea of what you want to write. I am assuming this is something you have thought about, wrestled with, maybe even jotted down some ideas over months or years, and finally found the specific path you want to write down. So, from there, we can move on to **outlining**. Maybe you like to make a nice formal outline, laying out your chapters by name and writing brief blurbs below them. Maybe you like bubble mapping. Maybe you have sticky notes all over the place and a giant pinboard on the wall (it's me. I'm that one. I also keep binders). Whatever style you like to use, use it consistently. I have since become more organized with my outlining. I tend to write things on paper, then type them up in an outline format on MS Word, and then I either hand write or print off things to put on my pinboard. All of this is to help organize your thoughts and writing process. It can also help you with publishing, but I'll get to that later.

Organizing

To help me organize my thoughts and writing plan, I tend to hand write all of these bits of information on either sticky notes or index cards and put them up on my pinboard. This gives me an easy, hard copy, visual reference I can look to when I need to remember some piece of information. I keep a lot of different pieces of information on my board, including metadata, timelines, costs, and interior formatting specifications. Perhaps you like to use One Note or Google Docs or the notes app on your phone or laptop. Whatever you like to use, record your data somewhere to refer to easily when you need it.

Writing Stage

Then, start writing! I have a number of tips for writing. Most can probably go in any order, but I'll try to keep it in a flow.

Be able to summarize your idea in three sentences or less. Some might call this a thesis, and that is one sentence. But if you cannot summarize your work, you'll give yourself and your readers a headache.

Know your audience. If you don't know who you are writing to, it will be much more difficult to find your tone or voice. This is not technical writing (unless it is), code, or even a speech. This is a book that will likely only ever be read in your reader's mind.

Along those lines, read a lot of books, both in your chosen genre and in other genres. This, along with doing a lot of your own writing, will help you find your voice and will help you meet the expectations of readers. And read good books, especially a handful of the classics. This will help you learn how to write by example.

When you go to write, after you find your "thesis," start in the middle. I got this piece of advice from my favorite English professor in college. He told us to start in the middle, then the ending, then the introduction. The reasoning is that you can't know what you're writing until you've written it. After that, you can conclude your piece and then introduce it. I have often found that starting with the introduction will limit my writing flow, or the introduction will feel out of place after I have finished writing. So, write the meat, then bookend it from end to front.

Always write a draft. And recognize it as a draft. The first thing you get down on paper is **not** a finished work or even a manuscript. So, write your draft.

Back. Up. EVERYTHING. I cannot stress this enough. Each new round of writing and editing should include you saving your work. And if you are able, keep a couple of hard copies, especially of your draft, midway point, and final.

Then, let your draft sit for a time. Maybe for you that's a day, but I'd wait at least a week before looking at it again. You need fresh eyes. This goes hand in hand with having a timeline for publishing. You need to give yourself time for edits, reflection, and resetting.

You'll notice, once you come back to do that first rough edit, that you didn't make any sense. That's ok. This is why your first draft is just that: a rough draft. Now go through with a fresh mind and mercilessly edit.

When you read through and realize you didn't always make sense, note how you say things. You might notice that you sometimes use colloquialisms or jargon. If this fits your genre or a character, that's fine. But not everything is common knowledge. This is another place where you have to keep your audience in mind. You will have to do a series of edits, including those where you read your work aloud and have others read it. I will talk more about this in the section on editing.

If you're writing a book that includes citations, know which citation format you want to use from the beginning and stick with it. It will help to know what format your genre uses. Also, it is helpful to hyperlink your citations from the start so you won't have to go back and insert them later. The References feature in Word is your friend.

This might just be a pet peeve of mine, but try to not use the same word too many times in a sentence or paragraph. Be minimalistic when you can and verbose when you should.

Keep a writing utensil and paper or sticky note handy for thoughts. I often find when I am writing that I have new ideas about a different section of the same piece I am working on or for a different project. It is not good to interrupt the flow or jump from project to project. Instead, write those down separately as they come so you can finish the task before you. Also, you'll want those thoughts for later, whether you use them or not, and you will not remember them otherwise.

Know when your work is done. Like a painting, there is a point when overworking will ruin it.

Know also when your work needs to be modified and be open to constructive criticism.

Pray.

Editing

You should never be the only person to edit your work. Even if you are an editor. This is not only because we are our own worst critics; we live in our heads. We read over our implications and mistakes. Even if you don't want to fork over hundreds of dollars for any type of editor, at least send your copy out to beta readers, trusted friend(s), and sign up for [Grammarly](#) (it's not perfect, but it's better than nothing). Also, read a style guide (MLA, APA, etc, whatever you are using) to get yourself familiar with editing and grammar.

While some people edit as they write, and most people do it a little, I don't advise it. The reason is that writing this way will slow you down and get you focused on tiny details rather than the big picture. You will lose your flow. Thus, I suggest you put off editing until after you finish your draft.

What counts as a draft? Well, there are many types of drafts. There are drafts and drafts of drafts. When I wrote my first book, I made individual drafts of every chapter before putting them all together. This helped me organize and navigate initially. I wrote them all down, proofread them several times, and then put them into one giant document. I then used **styles** to help organize my chapters (if you want to learn more about that learning process, ask me about it). For my poetry book, I had poems written...everywhere. When I finally sat down to write my book, I put all of them into one giant document, organized them, copied that one (I need backups), and then filtered out which ones I wanted to use. Using **styles** (I talk about those in formatting), I organized them and then began the editing process. But this first "complete" drafted document I refer to as my rough draft.

Then I created what I refer to as my series of drafts. This means that I would save a new copy of each draft. You don't have to do that, but as I said, I like backups. This isn't necessary, but it does give me a timeline of how many drafts I went through in each stage. For the last book, I had about a dozen recorded drafts. I did a lot of edits in between, but that means I went all the way through my book at least a dozen times (definitely more). There were at least 6 solid edits that I did before sending my book to beta readers, and a number after that as well. For my

first book, I lost track of how many run-throughs I did before sending a rough manuscript to beta readers and then several more before and after I sent my manuscript to my editor.

Between edits, I would set my work aside for a time (a day, a week, a couple of weeks) before picking it up again. After drafting, it is good to let your mind refresh before getting back into it again. This helps you, the author, get out of your head, helping you notice mistakes or implications that made sense at the time but don't in retrospect.

I also did several read-alouds with my book's drafts before sending them to anyone (beta readers or editors) and had my husband read them. I suggest reading your books aloud so you can hear how your words sound. If you are able, print your work off and keep a nice red pen handy (I couldn't afford to print everything off, so I just highlighted as I read on my laptop. Do NOT edit. Just mark or make notes). Often, a sentence that sounded fine in your head will sound awkward when read aloud. Reading out loud helps you catch your errors. I also suggest having a trusted person read your work. They aren't here to edit (although it's fine if they catch things) but to see if your work makes sense to another person who is not in your head. My husband noted that I often would state things without explaining the "next" thing because I assumed most people knew such and such piece of information. Constructive criticism is good. Be willing to listen when someone points out that they do not understand. That doesn't mean your work is bad, just that it needs polishing.

Now, [not all editors are created equal](#). I mean this both in quality and in type. Find a good editor you can afford and find the one you need. Do you need a line editor? Developmental? Copy edit? Find what you need first and then find your editor. Now, I happened to know my first editor back from college. I chose her because I was nervous about having someone I didn't know read my work. I can't say that this is always good advice even though it worked well for me. You need quality, someone you can trust, and someone you can be honest with. If I remember correctly, my editor and I met weekly after she read through a section and discussed comments and corrections. She would point out issues of clarity (when I was clearly too much in my head) and found flow issues and great points of interest. She found capitalization inconsistencies,

misplaced commas, etc. We talked about them, and I knew she was honest, even if it might upset me personally. It was for the good of me and my work. Take constructive criticism positively.

As my first book was heavily theological, I also found a trusted pastor that I knew would be kind but honest with me and find any incorrect scripture references or accidental heresy. This time I also chose my brother-in-law, but since then I have also gone to several other pastors that I know for other works I have written. As always, find someone who you can trust that will be honest with you. You don't need a cheerleader for an editor. That is what your spouse and launch team is for!

Finally, always allow time for multiple edits. My first editor also did another read-through at the end after doing a detailed edit just to make sure we didn't miss anything. This is in addition to my own read-throughs and "edits," even a few major ones with Grammarly, and having beta readers go over my drafts. As you see, the editing stage can take months. My first book took much longer than my second because 1) it was research heavy and 2) I had a baby in the middle of it. But the heavy editing process took about 8 months if I remember correctly. Four of them were with my editor (again, if I am remembering correctly). Time ranges will depend on both you and your editor. Talk to them and work out a schedule. Both of you should aim to be realistic with your timeframes. For both me and my editor, we had very young kids that took priority, so we only met once a week during their naptimes so we could work together in quiet. Some editors will take more or less time depending on the type of edit they are doing, the length and complexity of your book, and other unforeseens. Prepare for this and get your editing done months before you need the final manuscript.

DIY Cover Design and Formatting

Not everyone does this. Most people say that you shouldn't. If you do not have the skills to format and design, outsource them to a person who can. If you are low on funds and are willing to put in the time, effort, and research to do it yourself, you can.

The best starting advice I can give you if you want to do your own formatting and designing is, once you have your genre down, look at books in your genre. What do they look like? What are their sizes, colors, fonts, page counts, interior designs, etc. Do they leave extra room in the margins for notes, put their chapter headers in the middle of the page, or have off-centered page numbers? As a writer, you should be reading within (and outside of) your genre to aid in your writing. But if you are designing, your first round of research should probably be at a library *looking* at books.

Interior Formatting

A book is not a report written in Times New Roman 12pt font double spaced. Each genre, and type of writing, has a particular look to it. This look is not just content or cover design. The layout and format also have particular styles. The first question to ask yourself is this: How do you want readers to visualize your work?

Size

We'll start with the big picture: size. How big do you want your book to be physically? Is it a standard mass market paperback which is 4.25"x6.87"? A standard paperback nonfiction of 6"x9"? How about a poetry collection of 5.5"x8.5"? An 8"x10" cookbook? Look at other books of your genre to help you decide on a paper/book size. There is usually an [industry standard](#) for your book's genre, but keep in mind font size and margins for how many pages will be in your book as well. If you have tiny font, it might look odd on a large page. If you have a large font, you will have hundreds of pages in a small book. Keep these details in mind to make sure your book looks and not just reads like a coherent whole.

Organizing

Depending on the genre of the book, the interior organizing and content will change. [What sort of front or back matter will you have?](#) You should definitely have a title page, copyright page, and table of contents. Do you also want a dedication? A preface or a forward? After all that will come the body of your work, separated into units, chapters, or individual pieces (like poetry or short stories). You might have a prologue and epilogue if you are writing fiction or an introduction and conclusion for nonfiction. You could also include an about the author section, discussion questions, bibliography, or appendices. Perhaps you need a chronology, map, endnotes, glossary, or index.

If you will be writing a book that you will want to be converted into an ebook, I suggest making any headers, citations, and indexes hyperlinked at the outset as it is a pain to go back and do it afterward. This is also true for hyperlinked chapters for the table of contents. This brings me to **styles**.

Fonts, Margins, and other Interior Tidbits

USE THE **STYLES**. They are your friends. You do not want to get to the end of a giant body of work only to find out that you need to mess with the formatting. But instead of using your handy styles to mass change your text or headers, you will have to go back through and fix...every...single...paragraph and header manually (ask me how I know). Don't do this to yourself. Use your styles. You should have unit headers, chapter headers, body text, etc. Whatever separate fonts and sizes you need for a particular bit of text, make a new style for it and **use it**. Styles will also help you navigate through your text (especially if it is large) as you are editing and will easily convert to a table of contents.

Along those lines, decide on **fonts** and **font sizes**. Some fonts are industry standard, some are difficult to convert to ebooks. In general, I suggest using serif fonts. This type of font is typically easier for the average reader to read, and your reader will likely be used to reading this type of font. Times New Roman, Georgia, Garamond, and Baskerville are common. You can use other fonts as well. Sans serif are typically seen online. There are also many decent sans serif fonts used in

children's books. I have also seen an uptick in using fonts that are easier to read for people with dyslexia, such as comic sans, in children's books. I know we are all told to steer clear of that one, but always keep your audience in mind when designing your book, down to the font. What will make your targeted reader want to pick up this book and read it? Research what is standard for your genre and try to match. [Others](#) have written on this subject much more extensively than I have, and I suggest you do your research when deciding.

As for **font size**, I don't recommend going much smaller than 11pt font or larger than 13pt for a typical nonfiction book. Some mass market paperback books use a smaller font, and a children's (16-24pt) or large print (16-18pt) book uses larger font sizes.

These **font sizes, types, and colors** can also change depending on if this is a chapter header, a sub-header, or your body text. But they should match in *style* and make the text flow. Don't use too many different types of fonts, and don't make them all the same. For example, if you have a body text at 11pt, a subheader at 12pt, and a header at 13pt, your book will look like a giant piece of block text, making it essentially unnavigable and unattractive to readers. Or perhaps, for some unbeknown reason, you decided to use Papyrus for your headers, Vivaldi for subheaders, and Arial for body text. Your book would look like it was written by a 4th grader just learning about Word fonts. Don't do that to yourself or your readers. You wouldn't put comic sans in a nonfiction book, and you wouldn't put cursive in a children's book. Style your book within your genre and with your audience in mind.

Line spacing can vary by genre as well, but it is rare to see double space or larger outside of children's books. Most books are in single to 1.5 spacing.

Margins will also depend on the genre. Poetry books tend to have 1" margins, much nonfiction can have as small as .5", or even smaller (which, as a notetaker, I do not advise). The gutter, top, and bottom margins are typically the largest. The top will often contain some sort of header and the bottom will contain the page numbers. The gutter margin will change depending on the number of pages you have in your book and if you are printing a hardcover or paperback book. You may also

want to leave large margins for notetaking if that is the type of book you are writing.

Now, most of the above can (and should) wait until after you have finished drafting your book, and probably even after a few rough edits. However, if you are going to be **hyperlinking** anything in your book, hyperlink it as you write. Especially the citations. Word has a very handy reference tool that makes this simple and clean. Sifting back through to find every reference after the fact is an editing nightmare.

Use **section breaks** along with your **styles**. Use these to help distinguish between chapters especially. Besides making your layout cleaner, this will also save you effort later if you decide to convert your book into an ebook.

Page numbers should be inserted last. This is because you may find that you [move sections around or you add columns](#). This will mess up your page numbers and cause you a headache later. Be patient and wait to put your page numbers in until after you are done with at least a couple drafts and have begun formatting.

Illustrations

I told myself after my first book that I would never add illustrations again, and now I have two more books with illustrations. I have learned a bit since then that makes inserting them easier. Some things to note:

- Inset breaks before and after inserted image/illustration. And make sure you are utilizing the photo format tools. If you're not careful, you will end up having an image surrounded by text or covering over text.
- Grayscale is the cheapest and easiest to print, and if you do this, you need to make sure you actually formatted it to grayscale in your word document. Some printers get uppity if your black and white image isn't *actually* in grayscale.

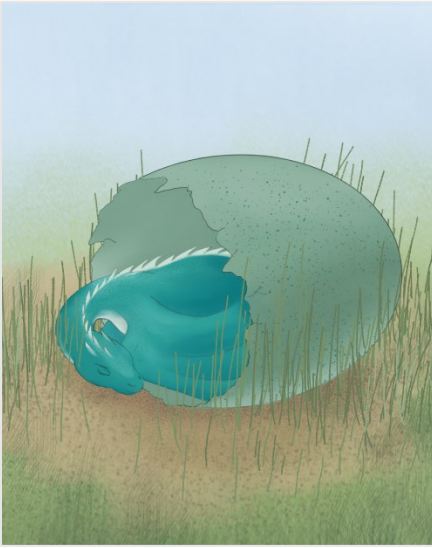
I recently decided to dip my toe into the children's book world. For creating my own pictures, I would sketch something out by hand in a sketchbook and then scan it into my computer to digitize and flesh out on Autodesk Sketchbook. I love this program for two main

reasons: it is free, and it is easy to use. ProCreate is the top of the line for illustrating, but if you don't have an iPad or the money to get the program, or are just testing the waters, Autodesk Sketchbook (ADSB) is the way to go.

When creating your illustrations, decide if you are doing in body text illustrations or full-bleed layouts. In two of my books, the images did not reach from side to side. They were in body text illustrations. But most children's books are formatted in full-bleed layouts. This means that there is an illustration leading up to and "bleeding" over each edge. When you are creating such illustrations, make sure you account for bleed. I didn't when I first made my canvas size on ADSB for my first children's book. I made the canvas size what the book layout size would be. Say you have an 8"x10" book. The printed layout will be 16"x10". But your canvas size should take into account bleed and margins. If you don't, your images will be cropped and you will be sad and your book will look off. So add between ¼"-½" extra on each side of your canvas to account for bleed and margins.

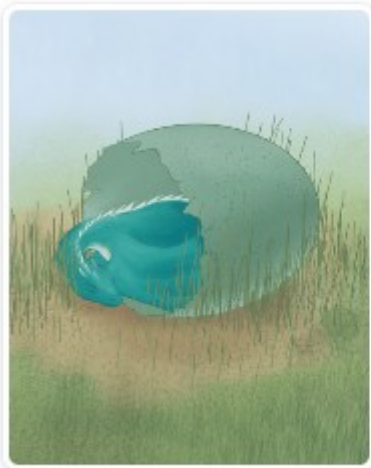
I set up my print layouts for my children's book in Canva. This was tricky at first, but what I ended up doing was:

- Download full page layout illustrations as a PNG from ADSB
- Make a custom size layout in Canva that includes page size AND bleed for one page. This means it might be something like 8.5"x10.5".
- Upload the PNG illustrations to Canva and insert them twice (because they were full page, half of the page would be in one Canva page, the other side would be in a second Canva page. This means that when this is downloaded in PDF form, it can be easily uploaded to the printer.
- Add in text boxes and shaded elements. Make sure your fonts and font sizes are consistent throughout and give room for bleed on the edges.
- Download a print-ready PDF from Canva to upload to your POD printer of choice. You may also want to upgrade to the better CMYK ink feature, but some authors do not feel this is necessary.



To my children:
May you always find wonder in God's creation.
Love, Mama

Full page layout illustration



2



To my children:
May you always find wonder in God's creation.
Love, Mama

3

Two page spread in Canva

Cover Formatting

Images, colors, and fonts on the cover should reflect the interior. Once you have your manuscript, this will be much easier to decide. In addition, you cannot fully design your cover until you have your final page count, as that will adjust the size of your full cover spread.

Front and Back

For the front of your cover, you will need a title, your author name, and a cover image. If applicable, you will also need a subheader. Your back cover will need a header, a blurb, and perhaps reviews. I sometimes include a brief author bio and the larger version of my publishing logo in addition to my barcode. As I mention in “Costs for Your Book,” do not buy a barcode! You can get them for free. The spine of your book should include your title, your name, and a small version of your logo.

When choosing cover images, keep the text that will be on the cover of your book in mind. You don’t want to cover up a focal point in the image with a bunch of text. Use negative and positive space creatively. Typically, the front of the cover will have a more dynamic image and the back will have a more minimalistic design, perhaps with a border around your blurb. Text and image should work together and reflect the content.

The fonts of the text do not necessarily have to be the exact same font as those in the interior, but they should reflect the interior content. For example, I used essentially the same font on the cover of my nonfiction book as I did in my interior. But for my poetry book, I used a much more “creative” looking font for my cover art that was not found in the interior in appearance but was in content.

As with the interior, you shouldn’t use too many fonts on your cover. Three is a good max. I believe for my first cover I used two, and a “third” was just one of the two but italicized. Limiting your fonts makes your cover look like a cohesive whole with the content of your book.

Images and Colors

When people think of cover design, they typically think of colors and images. Honestly, you need to keep the whole of the cover together in your mind. When you go to create it, you actually won't be designing it piece by piece but as a whole layout, but I'll get to that below. Like fonts, colors and images should reflect the content of your book. But while you need an eye-catching title, it will likely be the color and images that will catch the eye of your readers first.

Images are difficult to come by and decide on. You can get free ones or buy them from various places on the internet, but I like to stick with Canva, take my own photos, or create my own illustrations. Canva has many good free and inexpensive images and graphics you can use. They also have some cover layouts that can help you form ideas. I do not suggest using a stock cover. They look like they are a stock cover and likely won't match your book's content perfectly. And whatever you do, make sure you get the images legally. I will tell you once again: look at other books of your genre and see what images they use on the covers of their books. Your book should stand out, but not so much that readers in that genre won't recognize it.

Color is another factor to keep in mind. Color theory, while something of pop psychology, isn't completely wrong. People tend to subconsciously associate certain objects, themes, and ideas with a particular color. Blue is calming and often used with nonfiction. Yellow is exciting but might be used for a romance, a technical book, or a mystery. Red can say danger or romance, and black can be serious or thriller. There isn't a set description for any color, honestly. What colors catch your eye, match the mood of your book, or reflect the content of your text? What do you see in your genre that you or other readers like? Do a bit of research in this area to make a striking yet unique cover.

Cover Sizes and Layout

The size of your book will be highly dependent on the [genre of your book](#). I mentioned this above in the section on interior formatting. Your cover size will be the same size as your interior page size *except* it will be twice as large plus the added width from your page count and bleed.

Your cover design is a full cover spread: back, spine, and front (in that order, visually). Imagine you took a book, opened it up, and laid it flat, cover up. That is what your cover design will look like plus some bleed. Both [KDP](#) and [Ingram](#) have a cover calculator that will help you make a template for properly designing your cover, including bleed and space for your barcode. You should take these dimensions and give them to your cover designer or insert them into Canva.

As with everything else I've mentioned, you should look at other covers in your genre to see how they format the cover. There is usually some sort of flow or a focal point that draws in a potential reader. Furthermore, your cover should be readable. I do not only mean it should be readable by the person holding your book but also from a thumbnail image. When making your cover, look at it on your phone. I often do this on Canva. First, you can shrink the image to see how it would look at a smaller size. But your design folder lists your designs in thumbnail-sized images. Many people are buying books online, so their first impression of your book will likely be on a website on their laptop or phone. If your cover isn't eye-catching in a small size, a potential reader might not click on it to purchase your book.

Metadata

Metadata is basically a fancy word for all the specific bits of information that aid in sales and SEO (search engine optimization). Basically, you need to make sure your metadata is specific and consistent so that sellers can easily categorize your book so that the intended readers can (and will) find it.

Metadata includes:

- Author name
- Title
- Description (elevator, brief, and detailed)
- Author biography (elevator, brief, and detailed)
- Publication date
- ISBN's
- LCCN
- Imprint name
- Keywords

These must be consistent in spelling, capitalization, and visualization.

When I write descriptions, I create multiples: the short/elevator, the brief, the detailed/back cover copy. When uploading, I use the last two by having the shorter one on top and the longer one below. This is helpful for readers looking for a summary. You may even use your one-two line elevator description. As the full description is not usually shown at first when looking at books online, this allows readers to get a sneak peek at your description and then can click “see more” to read the detailed version. You should wait to write these until after you have finished your book.

And as mentioned before, you should also write these three types of descriptions for your author bio. Keep an elevator bio for a quick description (great for social accounts and business cards) and a brief one for your back cover or social media. Then make a long one for your author bio in your book or your website. Keep these in their own document for quick reference.

Pricing

You need to research your price market. This should probably happen whenever you research your title, among other things. You don't want to price yourself out of the market by making your price too high or too low. It is not just a matter of it being too expensive. You also risk the danger of underselling yourself. There is also good reason why most books within a certain genre are priced about the same. Name recognition can also inflate the price. Research your [genre and audience and price accordingly](#).

Other Publishing Details

Before publishing, make sure you have all your files and metadata you need and keep them organized. You should have every interior file print ready and clearly labeled. If you have a paperback, hardcover, and ebook, you need an interior file, cover file, ISBN, and barcode for each. This means one for paperback, one for hardcover, and one for each type of ebook. One type of ebook is called mobi, and KDP can convert that for you. The other is called epub, and essentially every other type of ebook distributor will use this outside of Amazon. [Draft2Digital](#) has a convertor tool you can use, but it is particular about the files you can upload. If you don't use styles or if you have a lot of images, you are going to have a tough time. I have tried other conversion tools but have been less successful. My understanding is that tools like Vellum and Reedsy are easier to convert, but I have less experience with them.

~~If you are publishing through Ingram, I suggest you wait for an upload code.~~ Ingram is now allowing free uploads, BUT it will cost money after a time to update your book if you need to. They also are somewhat fickle to work with. While Ingram does do wide distribution and help you get your book into libraries, you still have to do most of the heavy lifting yourself, such as advertising. Just because your book has been distributed doesn't mean libraries and bookstores will pick it up. Further, the website is very complicated to use. For example, if your fonts are not properly embedded, or the cover files aren't correct, or the color wasn't properly set to the correct grayscale or color code, you will not be able to upload. It is possible to get there, but it will take time and persistence.

But if you do use them, as they do allow for paperback and hardcover preorders, make sure that any dates you set for PUBLISHING and ON SALE are THE SAME. If you do not, your book will get into the hands of readers at the wrong times and it will ruin the point of the preorders, which is to help you go up in rankings. The other benefit of this is that it means the first time readers see your book they can order it right then so they don't forget or let something else come their way that they might choose to buy instead. You also need to make sure that once you enable distribution for preorders that your file is the FINAL version. If you do

get preorders, your book will start printing before the typical 10 days before the on sale date and you will not be able to update the file OR order author copies if you try to update. Additionally, if you order an author copy before the on sale date, that marks the start of production for Ingram, and you will only have 60 days to update the file before being charge for updates.

Now, in addition to interior files, you will also need separate cover files for each format of the book. You will also need additional files if uploading to Ingram as they are particular about what they will allow.

As for metadata, make sure you have every piece mentioned above and use it consistently. Every name must be the same, every capitalization, keyword, [BISAC](#) category, etc. This will help readers find your book and will help make uploading easier. I keep all this information in a word document so I can copy and paste consistently.

You will be asked if you want to offer a wholesale discount if you distribute wide (I only do this on Ingram as you get a significantly lower royalty on KDP if you do it there). The standard is 30-50%. I have not found that making a higher discount is helpful, but perhaps that had more to do with the genre I was writing in. Once again, research standards for your genre. Additionally, if you use Ingram, you will be asked if you want to allow returns. You will have three options. IF you ALLOW returns and someone returns your book to Ingram, you will be charged the wholesale price of your book. I had this happen once on a large scale and it cost me more than double the royalties I made on the book. If you do not allow returns, it will limit sales, but you should be aware of what potential costs you might incur and evaluate the losses your business can sustain.

There is also a best time to publish your work. Maybe you want to work towards publishing your book during the high season of books in your genre, or just before or after. You will need to balance the fact that the market will be saturated with other books of that genre with the fact that most people are looking for that genre of book during that time. Many people have [written](#) on this [subject](#), and I recommend that you consider their suggestions.

Publishing Platforms

I have mostly been referring to KDP and Ingram for publishing platforms, but there are others. There is Draft2Digital, Nook, iBooks, Kobo, Google Books, and others. I do not use these other ones for a couple reasons: Ingram will distribute wide, I find KDP gives decent royalties, and I don't know how to use them. But if you are more familiar with another program or if your audience uses a particular distributor, use them.

But note these two things: You should still **always** buy your own ISBNs and if you are self-publishing, you should never pay someone to publish your work. This option is sometimes called a vanity press or self-publishing service. More often than not, you'll find yourself in a scam or forking over an unnecessary amount of money. There is also hybrid publishing. I tend to think these are the worst of both self and traditional publishing. But that is my personal opinion. [If any of these](#) fit your needs and goals better, then go with them. But do your research first. I cannot stress that enough. *You* need to be familiar with what you are working with. Otherwise, you will end up with a bad book and/or be taken advantage of.

Publishing Timeline

Starting Out

- Decide to write the book
- Start writing/illustration
- Form Imprint and set up a checking account and PayPal
- Create a website, logo, and social media presence
- Research and finalize Title and Subtitle

Several months to a year out

- Edits (several rounds, including a format edit)
- Compile keywords
- Determine BISAC categories
- Decide on your pre-release strategy
- Research prices for all formats of your book
- Once you have finished your manuscript, write three descriptions: The detailed description, the brief description, and the one-line elevator description. The first one can be used as your back cover copy as well, but that can be a separate description if you want.
- Announce release date and keep fans updated regularly
- Finalize the above 5 months out

4 months out

- Finalize formatting: this includes front, mid, and back matter; margins; fonts and sizes; etc (this should be done whether you are doing this yourself or having a professional format it for you. Most of this is also done somewhere in the middle of your drafts depending on how you write. The sooner you do it, the easier it will be for you)
- Create cover template and design
- Find Beta readers and get them copies with clear expectations
- Buy ISBNs, file for LCCN, copyright book (if you want to), and create a barcode

- Market your book (ads, words of mouth, social, etc) (this can and should be done earlier if you have everything together)
- Send out free previews of your book. I do this as an email signup for my website. This is also a good way to boost your reader funnel if you have one.

3 months out

- Do the final edit at least 3 months prior to publishing
- Finalize the cover design 3 months prior to publishing (whether you are using a designer or doing this yourself. You'll want to have images for promotion)
- Promote your book
- If you don't have an author account on [KDP](#), make one now.
- Finalize your publishing files
- Upload files and metadata to self-publishing platforms (KDP, Ingram, Draft2Digital)
- Order proof copies of physical books
- Review proofs of physical copies and ebooks
- Set up preorders for ebook. If using Ingram, set up preorders for physical book. You will need to have your final manuscript for this. It is highly discouraged to have only a draft.

2 months out

- Continue promoting your book
- Upload book info to [Goodreads](#). If you don't have a Goodreads account, make one and make sure you also set up an author profile. This is a sort of enhanced version of your personal profile, it is not a new account. You can also link your blog if you have one.

1 month out

- If doing giveaways, set them up now
- Promote your book
- Make weekly announcements for your release date
- Make sure everything is up to date on your [Amazon Author](#) account, [Linktree](#), and [Universal Book Link](#).

Launch Week

- Approve your print copies on KDP
- Do week-of promo events

After publishing

- Order author and thankyou copies (you can and should do this at least 2 weeks before publishing if you publish through Ingram, but you can't order author copies on KDP until after the release)
- Send out thankyou and/or giveaway copies
- Send copy to Library of Congress if you registered for an LCCN

Advertising Ideas

As I mentioned before, I really like using my pinboard. As the days get closer to publishing, I will either hang up a calendar on my pinboard with dates and events or write it out on a sheet of paper and pin it there. Do what works for you to keep you on task.

I am honestly not great at advertising, but these are ideas almost everyone suggests:

- Ask for beta reviews or ARC (advance Reader Copy) reviews
- Giveaways
- Continue hype, increasing as the release day gets closer
- Ad designs with the cover image or [book mockups](#)
- Updates on blog or website and social media
 - Hey, I have a new book
 - Release date announcement
 - Cover reveal
 - Unboxing
 - Regular updates on proofs, edits, samples, etc
- Do video announcements leading up to book release day
 - Video announcements
 - Cover reveals
 - Unboxing
 - Giveaways
 - Behind the book
 - Preorder availability
 - Release week events, games, or info
 - Live readings
 - Q&A
 - Week of Events
- Library/school events

Costs for Your Book

There will be many costs for publishing your book, but not everything has to be expensive. This is for self-publishing. If you go a different route, you'll likely have different costs involved. But here are the basics:

Editor: A standard I've seen is between \$350-650 for 100,00 words. But again, this depends on the type of editor you get.

Cover Design: You can get a premade one on Fiver, you can pay hundreds to a thousand for a designer (research this well), or you can make your own on photoshop, Adobe, or Canva. IF YOU DO THIS, also check to see that you have the rights to use the images. Canva has free trials, and a lot of stuff on their site is free. You can also buy images. If you're going to go inexpensive, make sure it's done right. (Also, research industry standards.)

MS Office Word: This is what I use because I am familiar with it, but you can also use Vellum, Pages, or Reedsy. A subscription costs money, but it also comes with tools that make writing and formatting easier. Know your abilities and budget.

Barcode: These should be free. Do not pay for a barcode ever. [Use sites like this.](#)

ISBNs: Always own your [ISBNs](#). This keeps you in control of your work. I suggest buying them in packs of ten if you plan on writing multiple books. This will cost \$295, but this is cheaper than buying them individually.

Copyright: You can do this (it costs about \$55), but your work is copyrighted the moment you write something down. Also, include the copyright symbol (©) in your work and make a detailed copyright page.

Imprint: Filing for your DBA will cost money, as will its upkeep. The cost will depend on your state. Mine cost \$45 to file.

Domain: You should own your domain name for your website, no matter where you host it. This will cost money to renew, but it is worth

it. I pay about \$16 a year for my domain name and \$48 for the plan I use on WordPress for hosting.

Proof Copies: These will cost the print cost of your book plus **shipping**. This cost will vary depending on the size, cover, interior color, and page count of your book.

Beta Copies: I send free PDFs to my beta readers initially, but then I also try to send a physical copy later as a thank you. This isn't necessary, just nice. You will also need to add in **shipping**, but media mail is usually inexpensive.

Ads: I have had no success with ads, so I am afraid you will need to go elsewhere (I've heard Mark Dawson is good) for this information. I rely on having a broad social media presence, good friends, and word of mouth.

Giveaways: These will include print cost and shipping multiplied by how many giveaways you do.

Author Copies: I also order a copy for myself off each platform I publish on (KDP and Ingram). I like to be able to see the difference between the two prints. These cost print price and shipping.

Swag: This is fun for giveaways and as a thank you to readers and beta readers. You could do bookmarks, stickers, postcards, etc. that fit your brand. Not necessary, just fun. These cost print costs and shipping (included if you're already shipping a book).

Business Cards: These seem to be going by the wayside. My suggestion is to make a Linktree account and keep the QR code on a picture on your phone. I have an album on my phone called "author" where I keep standard pictures I use (my photo, bookshelf, and QR code) to be able to pull out quickly.

Other: Shipping, returns, flash drives, adobe, and other costs should be taken into account. There will be surprises, so try to have something of a monetary foundation.

Cheat sheets

One of the main reasons I put this guide together, besides the timeline, is so that I would have my cheat sheets and links together. I searched far for this information when I first started. I hope they will be helpful to you!

General Links

[Fonts](#)

[Font Sizes](#)

[Fonts and More](#)

[Barcode Generator](#)

[Book Mockup](#)

[Book Size Standards by Genre](#)

[Canva](#)

[Citations](#)

[Ebook Converter](#)

[Editors](#)

[Formatting and More](#)

[Front, Mid, and Back Matter](#)

[Genre Pricing](#)

[Goodreads Author Program](#)

[Ingram Cover Template Generator](#)

[ISBNs](#)

[KDP Cover Template Calculator](#)

[Linktree](#)

[Page Counts Standards by Genre](#)

[Publishing Types](#)

[Publishing Months](#)

[Universal Book Link](#)

Keyboard Shortcuts

Copyright Symbol (©): alt+0169 or ctrl+alt+c

Copy: ctrl+c

Paste: ctrl+v

Find: ctrl+f

Save: ctrl+s

Bold: ctrl+b

Italics: ctrl+i

Underline: ctrl+u

En-dash(–): ctrl+MINUS

Em-dash(—): ctrl+alt+MINUS

Copyright Page Example

Copyright © DATE by YOUR AUTHOR NAME.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the author, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

ISBN: 0000000000 (Paperback)

ISBN: 0000000000 (Hardcover)

ISBN: 0000000000 (Ebook)

ASIN: 0000000000 (Kindle)

LCCN: 0000000000

YOUR PUBLISHING IMPRINT

www.YOURWEBSITE.com

Children's book

<https://underdown.org/>

<http://editorialanonymous.blogspot.com/2008/10/basic-book-construction.html>

<http://www.meghan-mccarthy.com/illustratorsguide.html>

<https://www.inkygirl.com/inkygirl-main/2015/11/4/free-picture-book-thumbnail-templates-for-writers-and-illust.html>

<http://www.callawind.com/effective-childrens-book-design>

<https://brookevitale.com/blog/childrens-book-layout>

<https://design.tutsplus.com/tutorials/how-to-create-a-page-layout-for-a-childrens-book-in-indesign-cc--cms-33880>

<https://www.wordsandpics.org/2013/08/picture-book-basics-sketches-and-layout.html>

<https://www.bookdesignmadesimple.com/design-a-childrens-picture-book/>